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AUTHOR Wilkes, Sam T.; Love-Wilkes, Rebecca
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ABSTRACT

The school principal must secure maximum performance from teachers to achieve the goals set forth by the district superintendent and the school board. To accomplish this, the principals' authority must be accepted by the faculty. The extent of faculty members' response to orders or directives issued by authority figures is determined by each member's zone of indifference. To investigate the relationship between principals' experience and teachers' acceptance of authority, the Zones of Indifference Instrument was administered to 41 teachers from 3 Mississsippi public elementary schools where the principal had less than 1 year of experience, and to 59 teachers from 3 like schools, but where the principal had 5 or more years of experience. The results indicated a significant difference in authority acceptance between teachers with inexperienced and experienced principals. According to nine significant item scores from the survey, teachers in schools with experienced principals were less likely to grant the principal authority than were teachers in schools with inexperienced principals. Teachers in schools with inexperienced principals rated 16 of 41 items as greater conflict sources than teachers in schools with experienced principals. Teachers in schools with experienced principals rated 25 of 41 items as greater conflict sources. (KM)

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# THE RELATIONSHIP OF ADMINISTRATORS' EXPERIENCE AND TEACHERS' ACCEPTANCE OF AUTHORITY IN SELECTED MISSISSIPPI SCHOOLS

Sam T. Wilkes
Professor of Educational Leadership

Rebecca Love-Wilkes
Vocational Education Curriculum Specialist

Mississippi State University

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## Introduction

Identification of factors contributing to effective leadership has been a subject of research for many years. In the business world, leadership is traditionally goal-centered and profit-minded, or "scientific." In the educational sphere, leadership is traditionally considered to be more of a "human relations" endeavor, designed to suit a "cooperative system."[1] While these approaches to leadership may differ considerably, both recognize authority as a central consideration in the leader's maintenance of interpersonal relationships with subordinates.

The principal occupies the traditional position of authority in a local educational agency. In that position, he is expected to accomplish the purposes of the organization, referred to by Barnard as "effectiveness," while maintaining positive interpersonal relationships, thus satisfying the individual motives, which Barnard calls "efficiency." Barnard further defies traditional concepts of authority by setting forth an acceptance theory of authority that results in diverse compliance behavior. According to the theory,

> "the decision as to whether an order has authority or not lies with the person to whom it is addressed, and does not reside in 'persons of authority' or those who issue these orders."[2]

The concept of "zones of indifference" was advanced by Barnard in order to facilitate and further explain this acceptance theory of authority. Others, like

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[1] Chester I. Barnard, The Functions of the Executive (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1948), p. 163.

[2] Ibid.

Fiedler,[3] Simon,[4] and Kunz dealt with the same concept but termed it "zones of acceptance," presenting a positive implication.[5] Simply stated, the theory is that the extent to which people respond to orders depends on the individual's perception: Some orders are clearly unacceptable to certain individuals, while others are somewhat neutral to the same individuals, and still other orders would be unquestionably acceptable to them. The extent to which people respond to orders or directives issued by authority figures is determined by the "zone of indifference." The concept further suggests that the zone of indifference differs with the individuals within the organization; it may be wider or narrower with different individuals within an organization. The difference in zone size is created by the degree to which incentives surpass consequences determining the individual's fidelity to the organization.

According to Morphet, Johns, and Riller, conflict is inherent in the principal's role. He is under pressure from the superintendent and board to achieve their goals, and at the same time he is under pressure from the teachers to assist them in attaining their individual goals.[6] The principal must secure

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[3]Fred E. Fiedler, A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1967).

[4]Herbert Simon, Administrative Behavior (New York: The Free Press, 1968).

[5]Daniel Walter Kunz, "Leader Behavior of Principals and the Professional Zone of Acceptance of Teachers." Unpublished Ed.D. Dissertation, School of Education, Rutgers University, 1973).

[6]Edgar L. Morphet, Roe L. Johns, and Theodore L. Reller, Educational Organization and Administration (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.), p. 364.

maximum performance from teachers in order to achieve goals set forth by the superintendent and the school board. In order to secure maximum teacher performance, the authority of the principal must be accepted by the faculty.

Consideration then must be given to possible factors contributing to teachers' granting of authority to principals. Previous studies have considered zones of indifference in relation to such factors as teacher morale,[7] subject taught by teachers,[8] whether teachers had negotiated contracts,[9] teachers' perceptions of beaureaucratization and professionalization,[10] teachers' perceptions of the supervisory conference,[11] and the orientation of teachers (whether that orientation

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[7]Joe M. Blackbourn and Sam T. Wilkes, "The Relationship of Teacher Morale and Zones of Indifference." Paper presented at the Mid-South Educational Research Association Annual Conference, 1985.

[8]John Perry, et al., "Zones of Indifference As To Directives Among Vocational Directors, Auto Mechanics Teachers, Business Education Teachers, and Distributive Education Teachers in Selected Secondary Schools in Mississippi." Paper presented at the Mid-South Educational Research Association Annual Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, November 1982.

[9]Cynthia A. Ward, "A Comparison Between the Acceptance of Authority by Secondary Teachers in a State Where Contracts Are Negotiated and in a State Where Contracts Are Not Negotiated." Unpublished Ed.D. Dissertation, Mississippi State University, 1982.

[10]Jane Bruner Woodruff and Sam T. Wilkes, "The Relationship of Teachers' Perceptions of the Degree of Bureaucratization and Professionalization and Their Compliance with Administrative Directives." Paper presented at the Mid-South Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Louisville, Kentucky, November 1988.

[11]Joe M. Blackbourn and Sam T. Wilkes, "The Relationship of Teachers' Perceptions of the Supervisory Conference and Teachers' Zones of Indifference." Paper presented at the Mid-South Educational Research Association Annual Conference, 1986.

is local or cosmopolitan).[12] No consideration has been given to previous experience of the principal as a factor for teachers' granting the principal authority. This study will investigate the relationship of principals' experience and teachers' acceptance of authority.

## Problem

The problem in this study was to determine which administrative policies differentiate between zones of indifference in acceptance of authority of classroom teachers in selected schools with experienced principals and in selected schools with inexperienced principals.

As a means of structuring the problem, answers were sought to the following questions:

1. Are there significant differences between acceptance of authority of classroom teachers in schools with inexperienced principals and acceptance of authority of classroom teachers in schools with experienced principals as measured by each item of the Zones of Indifference Instrument?

2. Will any combination of responses to items of the Zones of Indifference Instrument discriminate significantly between the acceptance of authority of classroom teachers in schools with inexperienced principals and acceptance of authority of classroom teachers in schools with experienced principals toward administrative directives?

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[12]Merre Thigpen Dorman, "The Relationship Between Teachers' Acceptance of Authority and Their Local-Cosmopolitan Orientation." Unpublished Ed.D. Dissertation, Mississippi State University, 1987.

## Instrument

The instrument used in this study was the Zones of Indifference Instrument (ZII). Wilkes and Blackbourn developed the Zones of Indifference Instrument to measure teachers' responses to typical directives issued by administrators. Two factors are measured by the instrument: teacher determined practice and administrator determined policy.

The instrument contains 71 items selected and labeled as to the factor represented by each item. Response to each of the items is made on a four-point scale scored from one (a directive you would comply with without question) to four (a directive issued by the administrators that you question mentally and refuse compliance with unless forced to comply), with all items being scored in the same direction. A high score indicates a narrow zone of indifference or infrequent compliance with administrative directives, while a low score indicates a wider zone of indifference or greater willingness to follow administrative directives.

Alpha coefficients measuring internal reliability for the two factors and the total instrument are as follows:

Factor 1 (teacher determined practice), .92;

Factor 2 (administrator determined policy), .88, and

Total instrument, .93.[13]

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[13]Sam T. Wilkes and Joe M. Blackbourn, "The Revalidation of an Instrument to Measure Zones of Indifference of Teachers to Directives Issued by Administrators." Paper presented at the Mid-South Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Nashville, Tennessee, November 1983.

## Sample and Collection of Data

The population in this study consisted of selected public schools in Mississippi. Schools were divided into two categories:

1. Schools with inexperienced principals, defined as those where the principal was in the first year of administrative experience, and
2. Schools with experienced principals, defined as schools where the principal had five or more years of administrative experience.

Three schools were selected from each of the two categories. All agreed to participate in the study. Forty-one teachers from the three Mississippi public elementary schools where the principal was in the first year of experience participated in the study, and 59 teachers from the three Mississippi public schools where the principal had five or more years of experience participated in the study. Questionnaires were mailed to the principals for distribution, completed by the participants and returned to the principal. The forms were then submitted to the researcher.

## Treatment of Data

A univariant analysis of variance was used to test question number one. These results are presented in Table I. A multivariant analysis of variance utilizing a discriminant analysis was used for question number two. These results are presented in Table II and Table III. The .05 level was used as level of significance.

## Results

A significant difference between the acceptance of authority of classroom teachers in schools with inexperienced principals and acceptance of authority of classroom teachers in schools with experienced principals was found in nine items. A lower score indicated that the group was more indifferent or in more agreement with the item. The items showing significant difference were:

1. Assignment to study committee.
2. Require attendance at PTA meeting.
3. Hall duty during change of classes.
4. Restrict topic of lounge discussion.
5. Require low classroom noise.
6. Prohibit report cards in classroom.
7. Establish policy to pay substitute teachers for extracurricular activities.
8. Structure student dress practices.
9. Assign teachers to sponsor student clubs.

Table 1 displays scores on the significant items. Scores on seven of those items indicated that teachers in schools with experienced principals were less likely to grant the principal authority than were teachers in schools with inexperienced principals. Scores on two of the items indicate that they were more readily accepted by teachers in schools with experienced principals than by teachers in schools with inexperienced principals.

Table I

Discrimination Between Experienced Principals and Inexperienced Principals Zones of Indifference of Teachers to Administrative Directives

| Item - Criteria | | Experienced | | Inexperienced | | Univariant |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | x | SD | x | SD | F |
| 6. | Assignment to study committee | 1.29 | .64 | 1.76 | .93 | 7.80 |
| 7. | Require attendance at PTA meetings | 1.46 | .78 | 1.86 | 1.09 | 4.09 |
| 35. | Hall duty during change of classes | 1.66 | .85 | 1.29 | .72 | 5.48 |
| 38. | Restrict topics discussed in lounge area | 3.49 | .93 | 2.85 | 1.30 | 7.37 |
| 40. | Require low noise level in classroom | 2.34 | 1.04 | 1.64 | .92 | 12.43 |
| 42. | Prohibit the keeping of report card in classroom | 2.46 | 1.12 | 1.50 | 1.04 | 19.14 |
| 43. | Establish policy to pay substitute teachers for extracurricular activities | 2.15 | 1.13 | 1.68 | 1.07 | 4.41 |
| 52. | Structure student dress practices | 1.80 | .95 | 1.44 | .73 | 4.69 |
| 55. | Assign teachers to sponsor student clubs | 2.66 | 1.13 | 1.85 | 1.19 | 11.74 |

$F \geq 3.92$ Significant at .05 level (df = 1, 98)

A total of 41 individual items of the Zones of Indifference Instrument was found to discriminate between teachers in schools with inexperienced principals and teachers in schools with experienced principals. This set of variables yielded a Wilks Lambda* of .13 and a canonical correlation of .93, indicating that 87% of the variance associated with teachers in schools with inexperienced principals and teachers in schools with principals who had five or more years of experience was

accounted for by this set of 41 items. The Wilks Lambda was equivalent to a chi-square ratio of 156.39, which was significant at the .001 level. Data are summarized in Table 2.

Table II

Composite Differences in the Zones of Indifference of Teachers for Experienced Principals and Inexperienced Principals

| Canonical Correlation | R2 | Wilks' Lambda | df | chi square | f |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| .93 | .87 | .13 | 42 | 156.39 | .001 |

Of the 41 items on the discriminant function, teachers in schools with inexperienced principals rated 16 of the items as being greater sources of conflict than teachers in schools with experienced principals as reflected by the higher mean scores of the teachers in schools with inexperienced principals. Those items are as follows:

1. Attend open house activities.
2. Changing classroom bulletin boards.
3. Require participation in curriculum study group.
4. Require written goals and objectives.
5. Determine teacher workday.
6. Require long range lesson plans.
7. Provide list of discipline cases handled by teachers.
8. Require teachers to perform maintenance or custodial tasks.

9. Require supervision of restrooms.
10. Outline policy of attendance at work.
11. Limit number of graduate courses enrolled in.
12. Schedule teachers to move to different rooms.
13. Prohibit teachers from leaving school.
14. Refrain from expressing opinion about community problems.
15. Prohibit use of corporal punishment.
16. Provide an individual personnel file in the office.

Of the 41 items on the discriminant function, teachers in schools with principals having five or more years of administrative experience rated 25 of the items as being greater sources of conflict than teachers in schools with inexperienced principals, as reflected by the higher mean scores of the teachers in the schools with principals with administrative experience. Those 25 items are as follows:

1. Use of library without teacher supervision.
2. Specify methods used in teacher-parent relations.
3. Select teaching procedures.
4. Standardization of classroom furniture arrangement.
5. Prevent teachers from leaving classroom.
6. Require teacher participation in school census.
7. Conditions for corporal punishment administered.
8. Determine test exemption policy.
9. Provide guidelines for assignment of classroom work.

10. Hall duty during change of classes.
11. Determine amount of planning time per week.
12. Assign school related duties outside the classroom.
13. Restrict topics discussed in lounge area.
14. Require low noise level in classroom.
15. Accept student into class after suspension.
16. Prohibit the keeping of report card in the classroom.
17. Monitor student classroom appearance.
18. Strict adherence to curriculum guide/daily lesson plan.
19. Structure student dress practices.
20. Require standing position while teaching.
21. Require teachers to use school cafeteria.
22. Establish format for written lesson plans.
23. Require instant gathering of data for office purposes.
24. Determine length of exams.
25. Prohibit wearing jeans.

Table 3 provides information on mean scores for the 41 items. Scores of both groups and the standardized function are provided. A function of .40 or higher was contributing highly to this classification.

Table III

Differences Between Teachers' Zones of Indifference
in Schools with Experienced Principals and in Schools with Inexperienced Principals
on a Set of Items Associated with Zones of Indifference

| Item | Experienced Principals x | Inexperienced Principals x | Standardized Function |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4. Attend open house activities. | 1.17 | 1.35 | .75 |
| 5. Changing classroom bulletin boards. | 2.07 | 2.20 | 1.23 |
| 8. Require participation in curriculum study group. | 1.34 | 1.44 | .96 |
| 11. Use of library without teacher supervision. | 1.65 | 1.57 | .44 |
| 12. Require written goals and objectives. | 1.27 | 1.44 | .71 |
| 13. Specify methods used in teacher-parent relations. | 2.12 | 1.85 | .85 |
| 16. Determine teacher workday. | 1.37 | 1.51 | .31 |
| 18. Require long range lesson plans. | 2.12 | 2.19 | .71 |
| 19. Select teaching procedures. | 2.78 | 2.49 | .31 |
| 20. Standardization of classroom furniture arrangement. | 3.37 | 3.03 | .78 |
| 23. Prevent teachers from leaving classroom. | 2.59 | 2.27 | .88 |
| 24. Require teacher participation in school census. | 3.19 | 2.78 | .85 |
| 27. Provide list of discipline cases handled by teachers. | 1.44 | 1.75 | .74 |
| 28. Require teachers to perform maintenance or custodial tasks. | 3.24 | 3.32 | .71 |
| 29. Require supervision of restrooms. | 1.71 | 1.80 | .82 |
| 30. Conditions for corporal punishment administered. | 1.32 | 1.10 | .79 |
| 31. Determine test exemption policy. | 1.51 | 1.31 | 1.16 |
| 33. Provide guidelines for assignment of classroom work. | 2.24 | 1.85 | 1.22 |
| 35. Hall duty during change of classes. | 1.66 | 1.29 | 1.03 |
| 36. Determine amount of planning time per week. | 1.76 | 1.44 | .70 |

Table III, continued

Differences Between Teachers' Zones of Indifference
in Schools with Experienced Principals and in Schools with Inexperienced Principals
on a Set of Items Associated with Zones of Indifference

| Item | Experienced Principals x | Inexperienced Principals x | Standardized Function |
|---|---|---|---|
| 37. Assign school related duties outside classroom. | 2.80 | 2.37 | .69 |
| 38. Restrict topics discussed in lounge area. | 3.49 | 2.85 | .93 |
| 39. Outline policy of attendance at work. | 1.21 | 1.34 | .71 |
| 40. Require low noise level in classroom. | 2.34 | 1.64 | 1.27 |
| 41. Accept student into class after suspension. | 2.12 | 1.93 | 1.31 |
| 42. Prohibit the keeping of report card in the classroom. | 2.46 | 1.51 | .94 |
| 44. Limit number of graduate courses enrolled in. | 3.07 | 3.12 | .68 |
| 48. Monitor student classroom appearance. | 1.56 | 1.27 | .89 |
| 49. Strict adherence to curriculum guide/daily lesson plan. | 2.34 | 2.29 | .45 |
| 52. Structure student dress practices. | 1.80 | 1.44 | .61 |
| 53. Require standing position while teaching. | 2.98 | 2.88 | .64 |
| 56. Require teachers to use school cafeteria. | 2.66 | 1.85 | 1.25 |
| 58. Establish format for written lesson plans. | 1.66 | 1.41 | .45 |
| 59. Schedule teachers to move to different rooms. | 2.29 | 2.47 | 1.33 |
| 61. Prohibit teachers from leaving school. | 2.41 | 2.86 | 1.28 |
| 64. Refrain from expressing opinion about community problems. | 3.07 | 3.10 | .30 |
| 65. Require instant gathering of data for office purposes. | 2.39 | 2.17 | 1.27 |
| 66. Prohibit use of corporal punishment. | 2.34 | 2.36 | .87 |
| 67. Determine length of exams. | 2.22 | 2.14 | 1.34 |
| 69. Prohibit wearing jeans. | 2.46 | 2.25 | 1.02 |
| 71. Provide individual personnel file in office. | 1.56 | 1.61 | .79 |

## Summary and Conclusions

This study investigated the relationship of the administrative experience of public school principals and teachers' acceptance of authority. Six schools participated in the study; three had inexperienced principals and three had experienced principals. One hundred teachers completed the instrument, 41 from schools in the first group and 59 from schools in the second group. The instrument utilized was the Zones of Indifference Instrument.

Analysis of variance and discriminant analysis were used to analyze the data. No significant differences were found in either factor or total score of the Zones of Indifference instrument, but discriminant analysis revealed that 41 items of the instrument did indicate significant differences.

A set of 16 variables was identified as indicating that teachers with inexperienced principals were less complying. A set of 25 variables was identified as indicating that teachers were more complying with experienced principals.

When subjects' responses to the set of variables that discriminated their attitudes of indifference to administrative policies were analyzed, it was found that eighty-seven percent of the individuals could be correctly classified as teachers in schools with experienced principals or teachers in schools with inexperienced principals on the basis of their responses.